

177TH MISS. BAPTIST CONVENTION



NEW OFFICERS — Elected by messengers during the 177th annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Oct. 30-31 at First Church, Jackson, to serve as Mississippi Baptist Convention officers for the coming year are (from left) Michael Weeks, recording secretary; Joe Pate, first vice president; David Hamilton, president; Donnie Stuart, second vice president; and Jerry Bingham, associate recording secretary. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

Messengers tap Hamilton for second presidential term

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

Messengers to the 177th annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Oct. 30-31 at First Church, Jackson, reelected without opposition David Hamilton, pastor of West Heights Church, Pontotoc, to a second term as convention president and unanimously approved a Cooperative Program budget of \$32,329,059 for fiscal year 2013.

A total of 920 messengers representing 457 churches registered for the annual meeting.

Joe Pate, pastor of First Church, Greenwood, was elected without opposition to a first term as the convention's first vice-president. He replaces Matt Buckles, pastor of First Church, Vicksburg. Donnie Stuart, pastor of Rock Bluff Church, Pelahatchie, defeated Gary Wyatt, pastor of North Morton Church, Morton, for a first term as second vice-president. Stuart replaces Chris Aldridge, pastor of First Church, Winona.

Michael Weeks, pastor of Pleasant Hill Church, Olive Branch, was reelected without opposition to the post of recording secretary. Jerry Bingham, missions director for Benton-Tippah Association in Ripley, was reelected without opposition as associate recording secretary.

For the first time since 2009, the Cooperative Program budget for next year does not reflect a

see CONVENTION on p. 10



KEYNOTE MESSAGE — Fred Luter, the first African American president of the Southern Baptist Convention, preaches Oct. 31 at the closing session of the 177th annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention at First Church, Jackson. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

Mississippi Baptists tackle debris removal in hard-hit Northeast

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

Volunteers with the Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task Force are on the scene of Hurricane Sandy's destructive aftermath in the New York City and New Jersey areas.

Twenty-five trained volunteers are conducting chainsaw/mudout work (Yalobusha Association and Pearl River Association), maintaining a shower unit (Lafayette/Marshall Association), and performing other services as needed (Colonial Hills Church, Southaven).

Chainsaw units work to remove trees, tree limbs, and other debris clogging response and restoration efforts. Mudout units clean or remove walls, flooring, and household items that have been ruined by flooding and storm damage so the repair process can begin. The shower unit provides hot water shower stalls and clothes washing capability for disaster victims.

The Mississippi Baptist mass feeding unit, a fully self-contained kitchen and food storage facility mounted on a tractor-trailer rig, was deactivated and returned to Mississippi on November 5, along with 20 volunteers. As restoration of electrical power picks up speed, the need for emergency meals has decreased and Baptist feeding units are being deactivated.

The reason for the activation was the original assessment in the New York City/New Jersey area to have a 600,000-meals-per-day Baptist feeding capacity, said Don Gann, consultant in the Men's Ministry Department, which coordinates disaster relief activities at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board. "Current Baptist feeding capacity in the area is 300,000. However, only about 100,000 meals per day have been requested, so the larger feeding capacity is not needed."

In addition to the Mississippi Baptist mass feeding unit, units from Alabama, Missouri, and Southern

Baptists of Texas have been deactivated and are returning to their respective home states, Gann said.

Deployment of additional Mississippi Baptist disaster relief volunteers and units with specialized training is under consideration at this time, he added, and no return date has been set for the volunteers who are currently in the field.

The Disaster Relief Task Force of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) is now accepting donations for disaster relief mobilizations such as the Hurricane Sandy response. Tax-deductible donations should be mailed to MBCB Business Office, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Checks should be made payable to MBCB, with "Disaster Relief" noted on the memo line. Donations can also be made online from this page.

For more information, contact the MBCB Men's Ministry Department at cwright@mbcb.org. Telephone: (601) 292-3334 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 334. For disaster relief updates, visit www.mbc.org.

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From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

Saving America from itself

Whew! Another season of American political intrigue has passed, to the relief of an exhausted electorate. It seems we barely get through one election before another is upon us in a most uncoordinated (and expensive) cycle, but that's a subject for another day. Maybe our candidates won and maybe they didn't, but it's time to move on.

Analysts paid to talk and write about politics *ad nauseam* have been complaining once again, though, about religious people for injecting religion — of all things — into races for important government offices. Religious people involving themselves in secular politics seems to unnerve non-religious news media and political types, who have an elitist tendency to talk down to the rest of us anyway.

They proceed, virtually without fail, to conjure frightful visions of a spiritual madman leading his mindless followers to take over the government and plunge the country into another Dark Age. In the just-completed presidential contest, Christians were accused of everything from ignorance, racism, and disrespect for the Constitution, to overstepping boundaries and just being pests.

We don't deserve that and we know that's not the true picture of religious people, but it's hard to make that point with arrogant people who buy ink by the tank load and electricity by the megawatt.

However, Christians should not be intimidated. There is a place for us in the process, and it's important that we take a major role in bringing about good government. We simply need to be Christlike about it.

Christians should offer themselves as candidates for public office, and Christian voters should support Christian candidates. Christians should pray for Christian candidates, and we should continue to pray for our leaders after they have been chosen by

the electorate (Hebrews 3: 7, 17).

We need to reflect Jesus in all our dealings with other people — even politicians. We must proceed cautiously, however, around Christians who apparently feel free to employ unsavory secular practices in order to succeed in the political arena. Questionable tactics and conduct, including character assassination and the advancement of untrue or manipulated information, should be avoided at all costs. All in all, it can get ugly.

Non-Christians don't understand what we're all about, but they get a strong impression of Christians from simply observing us in our relationships with others. They don't see us in church, because they don't attend church. They get their impression of us based on how we conduct ourselves in the public square.

Christians sometimes step out of bounds when it comes to involvement in politics. We engage in tactics that are not in keeping with the teachings of Christ. It is true that one cannot govern if one is not elected, but some of us believe in winning at all costs, regardless of the damage that is done to our personal witness and to Christianity as a whole.

The American people do need to reverse the course of their country in many areas of our public and personal lives, and Christians need to be involved in bringing that about. We just need to be sure we don't give our detractors the ammunition they need to discredit us and marginalize our participation.

There is a blueprint to help us build the New America we seek. It's called God's Word.

Christians can be a powerful force for good in this country if only we would exercise our immense political power in appropriate ways. Let's not be guilty of using worldly methods to achieve heavenly goals. Think about it, and then get involved before it's too late.

The illogic of abortion apologists

During the debate between U.S. Vice President Joe Biden and Republican vice presidential nominee Paul Ryan, the moderator asked a very interesting question.

Basing her question on the fact that both Biden and Ryan are Catholic, Martha Raddatz asked the candidates to explain how their faith impacts their politics, especially related to the issue of abortion. The answers were perhaps surprisingly similar in their foundation but vastly different in their application.

Ryan, a Republican Congressman from Wisconsin, stated that he believes life begins at conception, which is in keeping with Catholic doctrine. He declared that he cannot separate his faith from his politics on the issue of abortion. Therefore, Ryan concluded that the policies of a Romney-Ryan administration would oppose abortion except in cases of rape, incest, and to save the mother's life.

It should be noted, however, that Ryan had stated previously his personal beliefs even oppose abortion in cases of rape and incest.

Vice President Biden, a Democrat and former U.S. Senator from Connecticut, offered a very similar response regarding the beginning of life. He acknowledged agreement that life begins at conception as a *de fide* doctrine of the Catholic Church.

However, he went on to declare that he cannot force his morality on someone else and that a woman has the right to do as she wishes with her own body.

I doubt many people were shocked by the answers that Biden and Ryan offered. Some may have been surprised that Biden believes life begins at conception, and others may have been intrigued that Ryan did not espouse his personal views on abortion in cases of rape and incest.

However, the general tenor of the answers held to firmly established party platforms for each candidate.



Guest opinion
with Eric Lenow

In the midst of this debate, I find it interesting that little evaluation has been offered of the inconsistency of Mr. Biden's argument. There are two key elements of his answer that contradict many of his other political goals: absolute autonomy and the refusal to impose his own morality.

The argument for autonomy is common in the abortion debate. It generally takes the following form: A woman has the right to do with her body as she pleases. Her right to privacy and free choice trumps any other right. No one can tell her what she can and cannot do. Thus, a woman should have the right to have an abortion for any reason.

This is the effect of the collective Supreme Court rulings of *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton* in 1973.

There is logical and political inconsistency in this position, however, for Mr. Biden. This argument is libertarian in nature and raises the question of complete autonomy in every aspect of life.

For example, Biden (and pro-choice advocates in general) desire to see abortion on demand with no questions asked of the woman involved. She should be completely free to choose abortion for herself.

Yet, there are a number of "choices" limited by government restrictions that contradict the logic of this argument. In most states, a young woman under the age of 18 cannot get a tattoo. Even if she has parental consent, states like California, Illinois, New Hampshire,

see LENOW on p. 10

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LifeWay announces ebookstore, customizable ebook reader

NASHVILLE (BP) — LifeWay Christian Resources has launched a new ebookstore at LifeWay.com and a new mobile book reader, making it more convenient for customers to take their favorite books with them wherever they go.

The LifeWay Reader app is now available as a free download from the Apple App Store for iPhone and iPad and from Google Play for Android devices. LifeWay's new app allows users to build a personal library from a growing list of ebooks and resources from the same Christian publishers found in LifeWay Christian Stores and at LifeWay.com.

The LifeWay.com ebookstore currently offers more than 8,000 titles, and the LifeWay Reader app comes with a free pre-loaded copy of the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB). Other free content also is available online.

"The Bible features in the LifeWay Reader app make it stand apart in the market," said Tim Vineyard, president of LifeWay Christian Stores.

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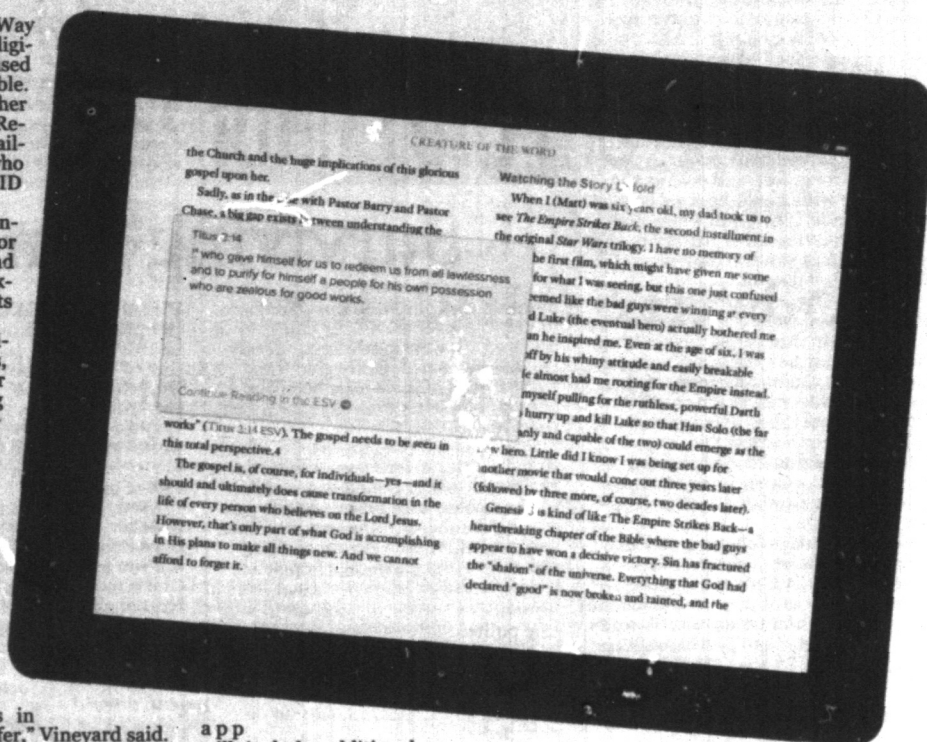
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Visit LifeWay.com/ebooks to learn more, register for a free LifeWay ID, shop for ebooks and explore the LifeWay Reader apps.



Allen accepts Midwestern presidency with 'sweet assurance'

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP) — Jason Allen, in his first chapel message as president of Midwestern Seminary, shared his vision about the role of the seminary in theological education within the Southern Baptist Convention and in serving its constituencies, particularly the local church.

"If ever I've been convinced of the certainty of God's will in my life, it has been unto this," Allen said. "Karen and I have prayed for months... and as we've sensed every step of the way the Lord's leading us down this road, it has brought with it such a sweet assurance."

"God has already developed in our hearts a love for a people we are really yet to know and a desire for community we are yet to even fully be in. We're so overjoyed to be here!"

Turning to his sermon, titled, "What hath the Seminary to do with the Church?" from 1 Timothy 3:14-16, Allen said his initial chapel message wasn't intended to be a manifesto for the seminary. Rather, he said he intended to share from God's Word about theological education, what the seminary is, and how it relates to the local church.

Southern Baptists have often had an uneasy relationship

"We are committed to serve the local church and not to point our attention or affections toward approval from the secular academy. We are called to serve a denomination, not to prod or push it. We are called to minister and teach in a context of confessional integrity."



Jason Allen

president of Midwestern Seminary

with the seminaries, Allen said, pointing to such questions as: What is a seminary to be? "Is it to be a divinity school or built and pointed at serving the local church?" "Does it serve a convention or is it built to change and prod a convention?"

Answering these questions, Allen said, "We are committed to serve the local church and not to point our attention or affections toward approval from the secular academy. We are called to serve a denomination, not to prod or push it. We are called to minister and teach in a context of confessional integrity."

"How you answer these ques-

tions determines everything about the faculty you seek to build, the curriculum you seek to structure, the graduates you hope to produce, the pastors you hope to equip, the ministers you intend to send, and the missionaries you intend to launch," he said.

The new president then underscored where the seminary's chief accountability lies. "Our commitment in the years forward, as in years past, is to our churches and our denomination, to train men and women for the nations for the glory of Christ," he said.

"The urgent role of the church

is to be the place where truth can be found," Allen said, referencing verse 15, that the church is to be the "pillar and support of the truth." The central role of the seminary, he said, is to come alongside the church in accomplishing the task.

"We are called as a seminary to equip men and women to be defenders of truth," Allen said. "We are to be proclaimers of the truth of God's Word and of Jesus Christ.... If there is one other place on the planet where people who will defend the truth will be found... it will be this place."

The president then asked what he called a dangerous question. "Where in the New Testament is a seminary? It's nowhere, but there's a sense in which it's everywhere. We get no clear command to have a seminary as we've so ordered it, but we see the mandate for theological education and biblical training in the Scriptures everywhere."

"Given the urgency of this and the way God is calling out individuals to serve His church, theological education is not child's play," Allen continued. "It's deadly serious... and I have a sense of urgency in my bones and gravity in my soul because I think I understand something

of what God is seeking to accomplish through a people dedicated to His work."

The focal point of this urgency is the proclamation of the Lord Jesus Christ, Allen said, describing the presentation of the simple message of Jesus as first priority.

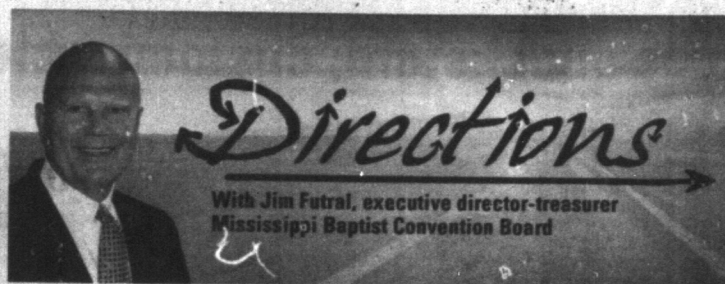
The preached Word confronts fallen man, he said. "If our presentation of the Gospel isn't challenging and confronting to modern man, I'd question whether or not we presented the Gospel in the first place," he said. "The Gospel is a frontal assault on the assumptions and convictions of fallen man."

In closing, Allen asked the question, "What does all this mean for a Southern Baptist seminary?" The answer, he said, entails a commitment to: keeping trust with the Southern Baptist Convention in both the letter and spirit of its expectations; having a servant's mindset in serving the churches of the convention; the Great Commission; a holistic ministry training experience for students geared toward renewing the mind, enriching the soul and impacting the heart; and a resolve to proclaim and herald the name of Jesus.

Sandy is the sweet name of a terrible storm. Hurricane Sandy did not get a whole lot of our attention because she lived out there in the Atlantic and was forecasted to move up through the Atlantic toward the northern regions of our country. She would not enter into the Gulf and hit Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, or attack "the land mass between Alabama and Louisiana," and for that we are thankful. She chose to focus on the most densely populated part of our nation. She was strong, wet, and cold as she teamed up with a cold-hearted cousin out of Canada. She is gone now and will only live in weather history books, but the path of Sandy's visit can only be described as a disaster.

In Mississippi, we are familiar with disasters. And we are equally mindful of the help that people give during disasters. It is not just hurricanes on the coast. It can be tornadoes in the rest of the state and ice storms that move across sections of our homeland. Depending on the cycle that we are in, it can be droughts in our farmland or floods from our Great River. We also know the help provided during disasters.

During the days following Katrina, the poster child of disasters, every Southern Baptist Convention State Disaster Relief organization responded to help us. They sent thousands of workers, literally helped to provide millions



Surviving Sandy

of meals, and gave millions of dollars to help our people and our churches be restored. The Scripture says, "Freely you have received, freely give" (Matt. 10:8b). And now we have been given another opportunity to say how much we care.

Today as you read my article, Mississippi Disaster Teams are feeding, doing chainsaw work and mud out/cleanup wherever they are needed. While you may not be there on the very frontline, you can help those who are as they touch lives and encourage hopeless people in the worst days of their lives in the name of Christ. Two simple things I am asking of Mississippi Baptists.

One, and this is paramount.

Please pray that God will use the people who are our response team in this disaster to share the wonder of Christ above everything that they do. Pray for them daily. If you know them, pray for them by name. Pray for those who will oversee the work. Pray that God will use our people to represent Him well and to share the love of our Christ.

Two, I ask you to give, but quickly. I say if you are not going to pray, don't give. Because I am going to ask you to give with two things in mind. One is to remember how you have been blessed either by not being hit by a storm or by the response of those who came to undergird you in the time of

your loss. Give graciously and thoughtfully. But beyond that please give whatever you can wrapped in prayer that God will guide in the use of those funds to specifically make the greatest difference for His Kingdom work. If you give to the Disaster Relief Fund for Hurricane Sandy through the Mississippi Baptist Convention, here is the way that the funds will be used.

They will be channeled through our Baptist State Conventions in the Northeast to meet the greatest needs and through them to our local churches, so that whatever impact is made the church and the community where they are will be joined together as Baptists in the name of Christ reaching out to them. We believe that this avenue of giving leaves the most lasting impact and the strongest possibility of helping people long term. If your church chooses to take an offering, give what you can. Wrap it up in prayer, tie it up with your love, send it on, and it will be used for the glory of God.

Mississippians are proportionately the biggest givers in America. Amazing isn't it? In this poor state that so many seem to look down on the people with the biggest hearts in the world reside. May God immensely bless you as you have opportunity to touch lives that you may never see.

The author can be contacted at jfutral@mbcb.org.

College News



Jennifer DeMelo, a senior biology major from Kenner, La., was crowned Miss **WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY** 2013 at the Miss WCU Scholarship Pageant on October 19. She was also the preliminary interview winner. Miss WCU 2012, Kenna Spiller of Petal, is shown crowning her.

In other College News:

► Sharon Schamber-Jones, instructor of business at **William Carey University**, recently had her first book, entitled *Gordon's Creek Anthologies: A Compilation of Short Stories, Poetry, and Photos*, published by Gordon's Creek Press, Inc. Schamber-Jones and her late husband, Bert Schamber, started Gordon's Creek Press, Inc., in the early 1990's and developed the idea of Gordon's Creek Yacht Club, including the logo, which is a forum for Hattiesburg natives to share their stories.

Revivals & Homecomings

► **Daniel Memorial Church, Jackson:** Revival, Nov. 11 - 14; Sun., 10:30 a.m. and 7 p.m. nightly; Jim Futral, speaker; Rick Green and Soldiers Again, music.

► **Brooks/de Church, Olive Branch:** Revival, Nov. 11 - 14; Phil Glisson, speaker.

► **Phillipston Church, Leflore County:** Revival, Nov. 9 - 11; Fri. - Sat., 7 p.m.; Sun., Harvest Day, 11 a.m., followed by lunch; Randy Williamson, speaker; Cricket Sims, music.

► **First Church, Belzoni:** Revival, Nov. 11 - 14; Jack Price, speaker; Wade Murphy, music.

► **Immanuel Church, Greenwood:** Revival, Nov. 11 - 14; Sun., 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 6:30 p.m.; Steve Lammons, speaker.

► **First Church, Itta Bena:** Revival, Nov. 11 - 14; Sun., 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Bobby Douglas, speaker; Tommy Kelly, music.

► **Spring Hill Church, Hazlehurst:** Homecoming, Nov. 11; services, 11 a.m., followed by covered dish lunch and fellowship; Joel Haire, speaker.

► **Crossroads Church, Petal:** Revival, Nov. 11 - 14; Sun., 11 a.m., followed by potluck lunch, and 5 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Jeremiah Andrews, speaker;

Jim Windham, pastor.

► **New Hope Church, Vardaman:** Revival, Nov. 11 - 15; Sun., 5 p.m.; Mon. - Thurs., 7 p.m.; David Barnett, speaker; Kathryn Winter and Michael Bishop, music; Michael Bishop, pastor.

► **Jericho Church, Guntown:** Homecoming, Nov. 11; services, 10 a.m., followed by lunch; Jimmy Benefield, speaker; Marvin Robbins, pastor.

► **Hickory Ridge Church, Florence:** Revival, Nov. 11 - 14; Sun., 8:30 and 11 a.m., 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 6:30 p.m.; Jamey Ragle, speaker; Gerald Simmons, music; Terry Fant, pastor.

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MS POSITIONS

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TILLATOBA BAPTIST CHURCH, TILLATOBA, MS IS SEEKING A PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTER. Interested parties may mail resumes to: Tillatoba Baptist Church, Attn: Youth Minister Search Committee, P.O. Box 101, Tillatoba, Ms 38961.

Illogical and Irresponsible

It was horrible. It was illogical. It was gruesome. On Feb. 5, 2012 Josh Powell locked himself and his two sons, ages 5 and 7, in their home and blew it up. Even though Mr. Powell was a suspect in his wife's disappearance, his actions are incomprehensible in that a father would intentionally kill himself and his two sons.

Mark was pulled over by state troopers as he was driving recklessly at a high rate of speed on a busy interstate highway. His blood alcohol content was twice the level of one being charged with public drunkenness. Sadly, Mark had his three young children in the automobile with him. Also, he was endangering the lives of those he passed on the highway along with his three children. You probably agree Mark should be charged with child abuse and the judge should lock him up and throw away the key.

But do we feel the same way about a mother who puts her child in the car, buckles the child in, gets under the wheel, and then lights up her cigarette, filling the car with smoke? What about that fam-

ily reunion where everyone in the house is smoking, and if you eat you must breathe secondhand smoke? Are these acts both irresponsible and illogical? I think so.

Smoking and secondhand smoke are not quick deaths like blowing up a house or wrecking a car, but the facts indicate they are deadly and can lead to slow, agonizing deaths. Earlier generations smoked without knowing the perils of their habits, and many now suffer respiratory diseases that make it difficult for them to take a breath or walk fifty feet without having to stop and rest. This can be prevented or at least curtailed with proper education and strict statewide laws.

Approximately 70% of Democrats and Republicans in our state support a law to ban smoking in all enclosed public places. Fifty-three of our municipalities have banned

smoking in all enclosed public places, working places, bars and restaurants. Eleven of our cities have banned smoking in all public places with exceptions such as bars and restaurants. Members of our legislature argue that cities are passing bans and there is no need for a statewide statute. But Mississippi is a rural state and if all our cities banned public smoking, approximately 50% of our residents would continue to be unprotected.



with Jimmy Porter

As of July 2012, twenty-seven states passed laws that banned smoking in all enclosed public places. Seven states banned smoking in all enclosed public places with the exception of adult venues such as bars and casinos. Six states have bans that are unique and different from the first two categories. Eleven states have not enacted any statewide bans. Mississippi is one of those states.

The past two years three different smoking ban bills were introduced in our state

legislature; neither of them made it out of committee. It is time Mississippi joined the other forty states that have looked at the facts and made a logical and rational decision to ban smoking in enclosed public places and the workplace.

What are the facts? The annual health care cost in Mississippi directly caused by smoking is \$719 million dollars. The Medicaid expense for these illnesses is \$264 million dollars. Smoking attributes to productivity losses in the amount of \$1.49 billion dollars. More importantly is that 4,700 adults die each year from their own smoking. It is projected that 69,000 kids now under the age of 18 will die prematurely from smoking. Kids in Mississippi buy or smoke close to 8.1 million packs a year. (www.smokefreemississippi.org) The fact is Mississippi can do better than this.

The Christian Action Commission will be joining the American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, American Lung Association, Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, and about 150 other groups and organizations in

asking our senators and representatives to take seriously this enormous problem. I will be asking you, our Christian friends, to contact your elected officials and insist they pass strong and strict legislation that protects you and your family from secondhand smoke.

You are the only ones who can stop this tragedy. If you have ever had a loved one to suffer a long, agonizing death due to smoking or secondhand smoke, then this issue should concern you. May we all join hearts and hands and make our state smoke free in the workplace and all enclosed public places.

In Genesis 4:8-9 Cain kills his brother Abel. God asks Cain where Abel is and Cain raises a question, "Am I my brother's guardian?" Yes, we are! Let's put our voices together and do something meaningful to make our state healthier.

Porter serves as executive director-treasurer for the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission. He can be contacted at 601-292-3332 or jporter@christianaction.com.

Truth is not relative.

Find it in the One who is, the way, truth, and life.

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life.

From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

BIBLIOCIPHER

QZ PMTYYZAZO FMX TM MQZ RAXLCPZ

XW YXO MQAXGYQ GFJZSCZW; JGM HTP

PMAFY CF WTCMQ, YBCBFY YSXAI MX

XYO.

AXLTFF WXGA: MHZFMI

Clue: X = O

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: First Timothy One: Five

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004, © 2005

Just for the Record



FIRST CHURCH, CALHOUN CITY, had a balloon send-off Oct. 27. Adults contributed Bible verses for the children to choose from and attach to the balloon.

HIGH HILL CHURCH, NESHOBIA ASSOCIATION, recognized Jane Davidson McNair with a plaque in appreciation for 26 years of secretarial services, including church clerk. Shown are pastor Don Cook, McNair, and Richard Graham.



The Children in Action of **BRANCH CHURCH, MORTON**, made cookies for school teachers on Children in Action Day. Shown, back row, are Kaitlyn Scales and Michael Ray Latham; front, Brady Phillipson, Vaden Latham, and Logan Lee Phillipson.

ROLLING HILLS CHURCH, CARRIERE, held a baby dedication Oct. 28 for Braden Alvin Dennis. His parents, Dustin and Chelcee, were baptized that same morning prior to the dedication. Barry Lee, pastor.



PEARL HAVEN CHURCH, LINCOLN ASSOCIATION, donated baby items to the Center for Pregnancy Choices of Lawrence County. Shown are Susan Nevils, Tammy Porter, Tiny Stephens, Cecile R. Stanback, and pastor Anthony Yarbrough.



The Lunch Bunch senior citizens of **HURRICANE CREEK CHURCH, SANDY HOOK**, had flu shots available to all seniors during their weekly meal Oct. 17. Shown is Willie Faye Buchanan, Melvin Ervin, and Linda Thomas.



SYLVA RENA CHURCH, YALOBUSHA COUNTY, started a new RA chapter last winter.

In other Church News:

► **Rawls Springs Church, Hattiesburg**, is hosting a fall festival with a chili cookoff and fun & games for children Nov. 10, 4-6 p.m. For details, call (601) 268-2801.

► **Goss Church, Columbia**, will host their 9th annual Raising of the Hunt Nov. 8, with doors opening at 5 p.m. Door prizes and Rick Burgess, featured speaker. Free. For information, call (601) 736-9563 or 310-0890.

► **Billy Jack McDaniel**, burned over 95% of his body in an oil rig explosion, will share his testimony Nov. 11 at **Colla Church, Colla**, followed by lunch.

► **Liberty Church, Liberty**, will host New Orleans Seminary's Seminarians in concert Nov. 11, 6 p.m. Fellowship to follow.

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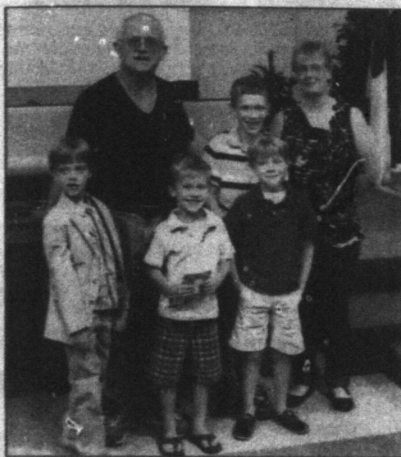
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Just for the Record

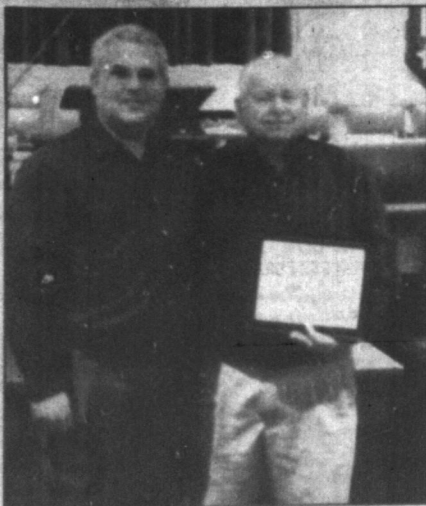


FIRST CHURCH, CHICORA, recognized its RAs at a recognition service Aug. 26.

Newly elected **MISSISSIPPI SINGING CHURCHMEN** officers include, from left, Bobby Sanderson, president; Barry Burris, president-elect; John McNair, south area director; and Eric McNair, central area director. Not pictured: Brandon Hardin, north area director.



SHUQUALAK CHURCH, SHUQUALAK, ordained Anderson Thomas as deacon and reinstated Charlie Higginbotham as active deacon. Shown are Marcus Anderson, Higginbotham, Thomas, and pastor Matthew Green.



FIRST CHURCH, RICHTON, recently ordained Jimmy Sanderson as deacon. Shown are Roland McMillan and Sanderson.



PROVIDENCE CHURCH, CLEVELAND, held a pastor appreciation day Oct. 28. Shown are Ottis Hankins presenting pastor J.B. Hayes, Jr., and his wife, Rose, with an appreciation card and monetary gift.



Terry Irby, pastor of **OAK GROVE CHURCH, SHUBUTA**, was presented a plaque in honor of his 50th anniversary of his ministry. Presenting the plaque is Yancy Taylor.

Staff Changes



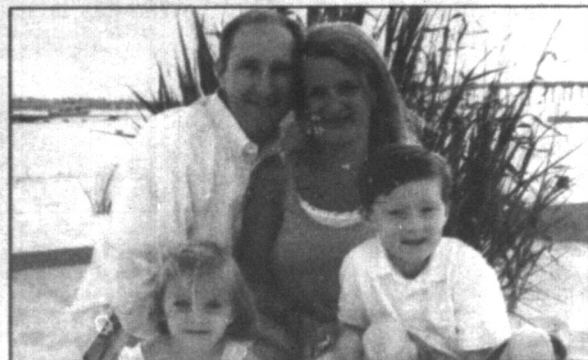
HIGH HILL CHURCH, NESHOPA ASSOCIATION, called Don Cook as pastor Oct. 7. He is shown with his daughters Emily and Abby and his wife, Regina.



ARKADELPHIA CHURCH, LAUDERDALE ASSOCIATION, has called Burt Cade as associate pastor. He is shown with his wife, Teresa.



SAULS VALLEY CHURCH, MONTICELLO, has called James E. McKneely Sr. as pastor. He is shown with his wife, Debbie.



FIRST CHURCH, ROLLING FORK, has called Britt Williamson as pastor. He is shown with his wife, Jamie, and his children, Nate and Maggie.

Resolutions of the 177th Mississippi Baptist Convention

RESOLUTION OF APPRECIATION NO. 1

WHEREAS, the 177th Annual Session of the Mississippi Baptist Convention has again been the recipients of the hospitality of the First Baptist Church of Jackson; and

WHEREAS, We the messengers of the 177th Annual Session have been blessed, guided, and challenged by the worship and informational program planned by the Committee on Order of Business, the institutions, and agencies of the Mississippi Baptist Convention, and the Convention officers and committees;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, That with grateful hearts we express appreciation to:

Dr. Bob Gladney, executive pastor; the staff, and members of First Baptist Church of Jackson,

The speakers, singers, and instrumentalists who led us in worship during the convention,

Dr. David Hamilton, our Convention President, who has led in his first year as president with the emphasis, Together for Christ - Lordship, Worship, Stewardship, Fellowship, Discipleship,

All of the officers, members of all boards, trustees of all agencies and institutions, committee members, and volunteers, who have served this Convention faithfully.

RESOLUTION ON A SINNER'S PRAYER NO. 2

WHEREAS, God desires for every person to be saved and has made salvation available for any person through the hearing of the Gospel (John 3:16; Romans 10:14-17; 1 Timothy 2:3-4; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 John 2:2); and

WHEREAS, A personal response to the Holy Spirit's drawing through the Gospel is both possible and necessary in order for anyone to be born again (John 3:1-16; Acts 16:30-31; Romans 10:11-13; 1 Thessalonians 2:13); and

WHEREAS, Prayer is God's gracious means through which any person can communicate with Him and is everywhere in Scripture commanded and

commended for every matter and every person (2 Chronicles 7:14; Matthew 7:7-11; Mark 11:17; Philippians 4:6); and

WHEREAS, Praying to God to express repentance for sins, to acknowledge Christ as Lord, and to ask for forgiveness and salvation is modeled in the Bible (Acts 2:37-38; Romans 10:9-10); and

WHEREAS, While there is no one uniform wording found in Scripture or in the churches for a "Sinner's Prayer," the prayer of repentance and faith, acknowledging salvation through Christ alone and expressing complete surrender to His Lordship, is the biblical means by which any person can turn from sin and self, place his faith in Christ, and find forgiveness and eternal life (Luke 18:9-14, 23-39-43); and

WHEREAS, It is biblically appropriate to help a sinner in calling on the Lord for salvation and to speak of Christ's response to such a prayer as "entering a sinner's heart and life" (John 14:23; Acts 2:37-40; 16:29-30; Romans 10:11-17; Ephesians 3:17); and

WHEREAS, A "Sinner's Prayer" is not an incantation that results in salvation merely by its recitation and should never be manipulatively employed or utilized apart from a clear articulation of the Gospel (Matthew 6:7, 15:7-9; 28:18-20); now

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Mississippi Baptist Convention, meeting in Jackson, October 30-31, 2012, commend the use of a "Sinner's Prayer" as a biblically sound and spiritually significant component of the evangelistic task of the church; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we encourage all Christians to enthusiastically and intentionally proclaim the Gospel to sinners everywhere, being prepared to give them the reason for the hope we have in Christ (1 Peter 3:15), and being prepared to lead them to confess faith in Christ (Romans 10:9), including praying to receive Him as Savior and Lord (John 1:12).

RESOLUTION HONORING DR. EDWARD L. MCMILLAN NO. 3

WHEREAS, Dr. Edward L. McMillan has served Mississippi Baptists as Executive Secretary of the Mississippi Baptist

Historical Commission for twenty (20) years; and

WHEREAS, Dr. McMillan has retired from this position; and

WHEREAS, He has contributed to our understanding of the work of Mississippi Baptists out of his learned historical background; and

WHEREAS, He has worked faithfully with the staff and trustees of the Mississippi Baptist Historical Commission; and

WHEREAS, He has facilitated a smooth transition with his successor; now

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, That we express our deep thanks for his great effort in using his expertise—the preservation of our God-blessed and rich Baptist history; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, That we herewith show our appreciation to Dr. McMillan for his helpful ministry to our churches, entities, and institutions; for his cooperative efforts, his gracious spirit, and his willing mind; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, That we Praise God for giving us such a generous servant who was an example of professionalism in his vocation.

Respectfully Submitted,

Trustees, Mississippi Baptist Historical Commission
Rev. Truman Scarborough, President

RESOLUTION HONORING MRS. RUTHIE COURTNEY NO. 4

In recognition of her accomplishments during her 26 years of service as Secretary to the Board of Ministerial Education on the occasion of her retirement

WHEREAS, The Board of Ministerial Education was formed in 1870 and chartered in 1889 to provide aid and support to ministerial students at Mississippi's Baptist colleges and universities; and

WHEREAS, for 142 years, Mississippi Baptists have supported thousands of students in the pursuit of their education and in following the call of Christ on their lives through the work of the Board; and

WHEREAS, the Board has relied heavily on its sole paid staff member, the Secretary, to carry out the work of the Board; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Courtney began her work as Secretary to the Board in 1986; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Courtney has served the Board and Mississippi Baptists faithfully for 26 years; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Courtney has tirelessly assisted over 2,220 students and overseen the distribution of \$6,543,614 in aid and scholarships; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Courtney has worked with 50 different Board members; and

WHEREAS, the Board wishes to publicly affirm Mrs. Courtney, her husband, Rick, and her daughters, Melanie and Melissa, for their family's efforts and sacrifices of time, talents, and treasures for the furtherance of Kingdom work;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE 2012 BOARD OF MINISTERIAL EDUCATION AND THE 177TH MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION, that we hereby

(1) Honor and salute the accomplishments of Mrs. Ruthie Courtney and recognize her deeds throughout her 26 year career as Secretary of the Board;

(2) Recognize her family and commend their concurrent service; and

(3) Extend our appreciation to Mrs. Courtney on the occasion of her retirement.

Adopted by unanimous consent this 31st day of October, in the year of our Lord 2012.

2012 Board of Ministerial Education:

Dr. Jimmy Stewart, President
Rev. Steve Wilson, Vice President
Rev. Ben Atkinson
Dr. Ron Bird
Rev. Stanley Huddleston
Dr. Ron Mitchell
Mrs. Lisa Rooks
Mr. Wayne Ross
Mrs. Paula Walters

Campus Representatives:

Dr. Daniel Caldwell
Dr. Ronald Meeks
Dr. Wayne VanHorn

Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either e-mail, CD or DVD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items are generally not publishable. Photographs can not be returned. Please do not attach photos with tape or staples.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0630. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

First person: don't be afraid to witness to Hindus

By Jeff Brawner
Correspondent

If you've traveled most anywhere in the United States recently, you've likely had contact with a follower of Hinduism, a religion that is becoming a major factor on the American religious landscape.

Witnessing to Hindus can be daunting. A seminary student described his effort to reach out to a Hindu, saying, "They have all of those gods. I just felt... helpless." With 330 million gods, a Hindu's simple response can be, "How can we be wrong, if we accept that everyone is at least partially right?"

Still, increasing numbers of Hindus around the world are trusting Christ. The church in India now encompasses more than 70-million people, the world's eighth-largest Christian population. To initiate sharing Christ

with a Hindu, consider these three steps:

■ **Befriend a Hindu.** Invite your new Hindu friend to coffee or tea. Invest time in your new friend.

■ **Avoid the urge** just to be the person's friend. Take a leap of faith and talk about spiritual ideas as soon as possible. Mention how God has blessed you, so the person will know that you are a spiritual person.

■ **Look for "spiritual clues,"** indications that God is working in the person's heart. If the person mentions thinking about spiritual matters, recognize that he or she might be open to a Gospel presentation. Seize the opportunity if it is available to take the bold step of presenting the Gospel to your friend.

In my book, *How to Share Christ with Your Friends of Another Faith*, I give four different approaches to witnessing to a Hindu. For one of those, I asked "David S.," a veteran pastor who has served in India for more than 11 years, to describe his witnessing approach. Notice David's brief non-intimidating style. He looks for a person's needs and then shows how Christ meets those needs. Also,



BRAWNER

note how David constantly points his polytheistic friend to the only true God.

"I always start a conversation with the topic of my friend's family, such as his mother, father, wife, or children," David said. "I then continue the conversation by inquiring about their needs. I

keep the conversation going until I find some place that isn't going well in the person's life. "Whatever the stress in his or her life, I would ask, 'How are you feeling about it? Is it worrying you?'"

"Whatever the specific needs, I express my concern and say, 'I believe in the One True God because He really loves me. I will pray for you. The One True God knows your problem and knows about you.'"

"Then I say, 'Would you mind if I pray with you right now?' I would bow my head and clasp my hands in a posture of prayer. If my friend is a man, I will put my hand on his shoulder and pray right then for that need. With that prayer I have ministered to my friend immediately."

"Then I think of a story in the Bible that would match his dilemma. After relating the Bible story, I tell my friend, 'But all those blessings did not make me a true

believer. Those were a kindness to me from the One True God.'"

"I might give my friend an opportunity to give his life to Christ; however, I probably will wait to do so. Why? I wait, generally, because he still will have to deal with many issues such as idolatry and polytheism. You don't want to rush the process."

David's approach is simple and reproducible. Start now to pray about finding a Hindu friend with whom you can share Christ.

*Editor's note: Brawner is chairman of the department of missions and assistant professor of missions, theology, and church history at Mid-America Seminary in Cordova, TN. His book, *How to Share Christ with Your Friends of Another Faith*, is available at www.hannibal-books.com and such online sites as amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com.*

Pastor: Hurricane Sandy sheds light on 'power of local church'

NEW YORK CITY (BP) — The elderly lady was afraid to open the door. Alone in the dark in her apartment on the 23rd floor of the Fulton government housing complex in Chelsea Park days after Hurricane Sandy struck, she was not accustomed to people helping—but Gallery Church in midtown Manhattan was in a position to help.

Ministry leader Chris Mills climbed the 23 flights of stairs Nov. 1 to reach the elderly woman, one of dozens of residents too frail to exit the building by stairs since elevators were of no use because of power outages.

"She hadn't seen anybody in three days. She had been without power since Monday night and we were the first people to show up to her apartment, so she hadn't seen anybody since the hurricane," Mills said.

"People get scared and don't know what's on the other side of that door. When she did open the door, she saw what we had to give her. She was very thankful and gave us a list of a few more things that she needed. We were able to go back today with that list and give her some more items that she needed."

Mills, a member of Gallery Church for three years, leads a youth ministry outreach in Chelsea Park, a community the church has adopted for ministry.

"We didn't show up until maybe two days after the hurricane and we're the first ones that they've seen. It just shows you the power of the local church. Usually in a situation like this the local church is the first one on the scene. We're

kind of first responders in that."

"It's just amazing that there are so many people in the housing complex here that have not seen anybody but us. That was surprising to me and overwhelming."

Southern Baptist Gallery Church pastor Freddy T. Wyatt mobilized 20 volunteers, nearly a third of his membership of 70, to survey apartments in the Chelsea Park and Stuyvesant Town neighborhoods, looking for those in need. He extended his efforts Friday to include two other areas.

"We have found dozens of elderly people. Some had no contact with anyone before we got there since the storm hit. We found some that were running out of food, some that were running out of water and some that needed their dialysis, and we were able to make that emergency connection for them," Wyatt said. "We're a central location that has power, and we're able to distribute the people out to different places."

Wyatt is focusing on providing the necessities of food, water, and medicines to those suffering, while looking forward to opportunities to share the Gospel. "I think that the Gospel sharing opportunities will take place over the long haul rather than in the immediate wake of the storm."

"The urgency right now is finding the immediate life and death needs, but over in Chelsea Park we do have a prayer station set up today where we're actively praying with the people in the neighborhood. Out of that, there will be opportunities to share

the Gospel. The aid that we're providing will open up the opportunity to share the Gospel for at least the next couple of years, I think."

He established a Sandy relief fund on his church's website that had collected \$7,000, which will help a church family, Wayne and Erin Burton, who lost their Jersey City home and 95% of their belongings in the storm.

"Our priority in that fund is to go to help the Burtons replace all that they lost," Wyatt said.

Most of his membership fared well, he said, with perhaps a dozen still without electricity. His church building is just on the edge of the power outage but lost power for only a day. The basement of the apartment building he lives in flooded and the building has no power, forcing him to stay in a hotel in midtown Manhattan.

The devastation has impressed upon Wyatt the importance of the local church, often in the best position to respond to neighborhoods in need.

"Last night I tweeted that Sandy has shown us why it really would be good to have a church on every block in New York City, because the needs are so vast. There are 66,000 people per square mile in Manhattan and you really do need churches on every corner to take ownership for their neighborhoods."

"God has been very gracious to help us to process all that's going on and to put together a clear, cohesive plan today to mobilize people to meet some of the most critical needs in Manhattan."



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Some pastors' politics pervasive in preaching

WASHINGTON (BP) — A majority of regular churchgoers say their pastor discussed the importance of voting, while 29% say their pastor took sides in the just-completed presidential race while preaching, according to a survey by the Pew Research Center.

The Oct. 24-28 poll showed that among all churchgoers — Protestants and Catholics who attend church at least monthly — 15% say their pastor's message was more supportive of President Obama while 14% say the pastor's sermon was more supportive of Mitt Romney.

However, what people heard from their pastor "varies greatly by race," the survey showed. For instance:

■ Among black Protestants, 45% say the pastor supported Obama, with none in the sample saying the pastor backed Romney.

■ Among white evangelicals, 26%

52% of regular churchgoers say their pastor discussed the importance of voting. Black Protestant pastors (79%) were the most likely to mention it, followed by white evangelical pastors (52%), white Catholic clergy (46%), and white mainline pastors (32%).

Pew Research Center survey

say their pastor was more supportive in the pulpit of Romney but only five percent say the pastor was more supportive of Obama.

■ Among white Catholics, 21% say the pastor supported Romney, while four percent say the pastor backed Obama. White mainline churchgoers say the pastor also was more likely to support Romney (13% to Obama's

seven percent).

Still, though, "most regular churchgoers say the messages they are hearing at church are neutral when it comes to the 2012 election," whether or not the pastor mentioned the candidates directly.

Meanwhile, 52% of regular churchgoers say their pastor discussed the importance of voting. Black Protestant

pastors (79%) were the most likely to mention it, followed by white evangelical pastors (52%), white Catholic clergy (46%), and white mainline pastors (32%).

Pew also examined what issues pastors discussed and found, according to churchgoers:

■ Hunger/poverty have been discussed in recent months by 83% of white Catholic clergy, 74% of black Protestant pastors, 73% of white mainline pastors, and 69% of white evangelical pastors.

■ Abortion has been spoken about by 58% of white Catholic clergy, 36% of white evangelical pastors, 29% of black Protestant pastors, and 19% of white mainline pastors.

■ Homosexuality has been discussed by 40% of white evangelical pastors, 37% of black Protestant pastors, 24% of white mainline pastors, and 20% of white Catholic clergy.

LENOW

cont. from p.2

New York, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, and Washington make the tattooing of a minor a crime.

In these states, parental consent cannot even trump the law and allow a minor to receive a tattoo.

By contrast, New York City is piloting a program in 13 of their public schools to make Plan B, the morning-after pill, available to young women without parental consent. Therefore, a 15-year-old girl cannot get a tattoo, but she can get an abortion-inducing drug.

I ask the question: Is she completely autonomous? Is the government telling her that she cannot do with her body as she chooses? Why does it apply to tattoos but not abortion?

This libertarian argument can be extended to several other areas that are restricted or outlawed by the government. You cannot buy a non-diet soda larger than 16 ounces in New York City. A host of drugs are illegal, not only to buy or sell but even to possess.

Marriage laws forbid a person from marrying his/her siblings and first cousins. Government even restricts the number of people one can marry. In each of these cases, government has said that you are not free to do with your body as you wish.

If Mr. Biden and other abortion rights advocates want to be consistent, they must disavow laws like these as well. However, I imagine that government officials could make a reasonable case for such laws to be on the books. Thus, their inconsistency is exposed.

The other part of Biden's response relates to the idea that he is unwilling to impose his morality on someone else. This is egregiously inconsistent for anyone involved in government. The role of laws established by government is the imposition of morality on others. Laws that prohibit murder, theft, fraud, and slander impose someone's morality on the rest of society.

In fact, all laws impose morality. For the argument of abortion rights advocates to be consistent, one has to accept moral anarchy. Everyone should be able to do what is right in his own eyes.

Abortion rights advocates claim they do not want morality imposed on them, but they are willing to accept the imposition of their own morality on others. The recent birth control mandate added to the health care law imposes abortion rights morality on everyone by requiring that insurance companies supply birth control to all individuals covered at no charge to the patient.

This mandate includes abortion-inducing drugs, such as Plan B and ella. If abortion rights advocates are so opposed to the imposition of morality on others, they should oppose this mandate as well.

As seen in the examples above, the logic of abortion rights advocates is inconsistent. Without even considering the merit of their arguments, one can see that they are unable to apply their logic universally.

Lenow is assistant professor of ethics at Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth. His commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press.

CONVENTION

cont. from p.1

decrease. While the budget for next year is the same amount as the current year, convention leaders have been heartened by the halt in year-over-year declining budgets.

Funding for Southern Baptist causes remains steady in the new budget at \$11,719,284 (36.25%). Likewise, funding for Mississippi Baptist agencies and institutions is the same at \$8,103,903 (25.06%) and for Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) ministries at \$11,635,872 (36%). The Church Retirement and Protection category rounds out the budget at \$870,000 (2.69%) and is the same amount as the current budget.

Messengers approved four resolutions (see page 8 in this issue):

■ Appreciation to the staff and congregation of First Church, Jackson, for hosting the annual meeting; to the singers, speakers, and instrumentalists who participated in the meeting; to Hamilton for his service as president over the past year; and to the Mississippi Baptists who serve the convention as trustees and officers of the various agencies and institutions.

■ Commending the use of a Sinner's Prayer as "a biblically sound and spiritually significant component of the evangelistic task of the church."

■ Commending Edward L. McMillan, longtime professor at Baptist-affiliated Mississippi College in Clinton, upon his retirement after 20 years as executive director of the Mississippi Baptist Historical Commission.

■ Commending Ruthie Courtney upon her retirement after 26 years as secretary to the Board of Ministerial Education of the Mississippi

Baptist Convention.

Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President Fred Luter, senior pastor of Franklin Avenue Church in New Orleans and the first African American to serve as leader of the nation's largest Protestant denomination, received a standing ovation during his keynote message that closed out the annual meeting on the morning of Oct. 31. Luter also spoke at a post-meeting luncheon for Mississippi Baptist African American pastors hosted by the MBCB Mission Strategy Division.

Also preaching at the annual meeting were Hamilton, who delivered the President's Address on the morning of Oct. 30; Jim Phillips, senior pastor of North Greenwood Church, Greenwood, who delivered the Convention Sermon on the afternoon of Oct. 30; and Jim Futral, MBCB executive director, who presented the 2013 MBCB theme interpretation, "Lordship," on the evening of Oct. 30.

Jeff Iorg, president of Golden Gate Seminary, former executive director of the Northwest Baptist Convention in Vancouver, Wa., and chaplain for the Major League Baseball 2012 World Series champions, the San Francisco Giants, presented the Bible Treasures series of devotionals during each session of the annual meeting.

Praise and Worship were provided by the Praise Team and Sanctuary Choir from West Heights Church; Mississippi Singing Churchmen; Sanctuary Choir of North Greenwood Church; Mississippi Baptist Combined Choirs and Music Worship Leaders; and Forgiven Quartet of First Church, Ridgeland.

Congregational worship leaders included James Francis, minister of music at West Heights Church; Keith Stevens, minister of music at

North Greenwood Church; Slater Murphy, MBCB director of church music; and Derrick Cowan, minister of arts and discipleship at First Church, Ridgeland.

Frank Gunn, chairman of the Time, Place, and Preacher Committee and retired pastor of First Church, Biloxi, announced that the 2013 annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention will be held at First Church, Jackson, on Oct. 29-30. Chip Stevens, senior pastor of First Church, Starkville, will preach the convention sermon. Rickey Blythe, pastor of First Church, New Albany, was chosen as alternate preacher.

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Living with Truth • 2 Peter 1:1-21

Living with truth is another important ingredient for surviving and thriving in difficult times. Bernie Madoff became a wealthy man as an investment broker by promising large returns to people who invested in false products. People who had invested their whole life savings with him lost everything overnight.

We can only survive and thrive in the long term by living with truth. Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me" (Jn. 14:6, NIV). The ultimate truth is the gospel of Jesus Christ. We find our whole purpose in life through a personal relationship with Him.

Peter identifies some truths related to "the truth" that we all need to understand.

1. POWER

"His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness" (v. 3, NIV).

God's power is true. When you trust Jesus as Savior, and receive Him as LORD of your life, you are "born again". God puts the Holy Spirit in you and gives you the power to live for Him. This power grows as you grow in your knowledge of Christ.

2. PROMISES

Through these he has given us his very

great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires (v. 4, NIV).

God's promises are true. We can chart the courses of our lives based on them. The Bible says that "God has given us the Holy Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come" (2 Cor. 1:22, 5:5).

The indwelling Spirit is the "divine nature" that Peter is talking about. God doesn't just promise salvation in Heaven for those who believe. He puts part of heaven in you as proof that His promises are true.

3. PRODUCTIVITY

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness... knowledge... self-control... perseverance... godliness... brotherly kindness... and... love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective

and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (v. 5-8, NIV).

Productivity is true. God wants every Christian to be a "productive" servant in His kingdom. No one should have a welfare mentality in church. Every Christian has spiritual gifts to give and spiritual fruit to share to strengthen and expand the church.

But "the truth" is, we have to "make every effort" to be productive.

God has given us the ability through His Spirit inside us, but we have to apply our

will and overcome our flesh in order to be productive. Peter is not suggesting that we earn our salvation. He is saying that saved people need to grow in their faith so they can be productive and contribute to God's work.

4. PROOF

But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your

calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (v. 9-11, NIV).

Proof is true. When a person who calls himself a Christian bears no fruit or gives no evidence that Christ is Lord and Savior of his life, others can't tell whether he is really a Christian or not. Billy Graham estimates that 1/2 of the members of Southern Baptist Churches are not truly born again believers. They have merely participated in the ritual of baptism. The truth that baptism represents, death of the old life and resurrection of a new life, is not true for them.

Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but only he who does the will of my father who is in heaven" (Mat. 7:21).

Only God can judge whether a person is truly saved. Peter said "...be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure" (v. 10, NIV). We all need to examine ourselves to make sure we have personally trusted Christ as Savior and surrendered to Him as LORD. Those "Christians" who are not producing fruit consistent with the truth need to repent of their disobedience or receive Christ as LORD and Savior.

Bishop is a member of Harrisburg Church, Tupelo.



Explore the Bible

with David B. Bishop

Do Life Together • Acts 4:32-35; 5:1-6; 6:1-7

We are to be intentional (ooohh, there's that word again, "betrotting," "obligating") in the lives of those who surround us, especially in our church family. God intended for there to be relational connections made in church. We are to intentionally — on purpose, by plan and design, and with determination — relate to others. There are some basics: find out the needs of others, be vulnerable enough to share these needs, offer help/accept help, and smile about it, learn from it, benefit from it, and move on. Don't dote on it if you are the giver or taker, either one.

Luke wrote about this in Acts 2 with supreme examples of this phase of practical Christianity where the early church members were committed to one another and did whatever was necessary to care for others. Deep, meaningful friendships develop with other believers. There's not a Christian alive whose Christianity cannot be enhanced by another Christian. Happens all the time. It's such an accomplishment when you become of one heart and mind by addressing spiritual, emotional, and physical needs of another. This newly developing church became of one heart and mind and began to address the spiritual and emotional needs of its new members. Holy cow, it's just basic benevolence. Get on with it and make it habitual.

ACTS 4:32-35: MOTIVATION TO VOLUNTEER

We learn that these primitive church supporters had great grace upon them and that there was no lack among them because of their selling and sharing wherever there was need. They seemed to be of one heart and one soul.

Don't try to identify this sharing

of goods with your definition of communism. This is a CHURCH practice, not a STATE edict. Communism is

controlled by the state, and the Jerusalem project never denied anyone keeping private property. "As many as were possessors of lands or houses..." means they voluntarily sold and shared. Satisfying physical needs of another satisfies spiritual needs of the giver. These early believers understood that what they might call their own really belonged to God and that life was for living and giving. Many sold and laid the gained profits at the feet of the apostles. Thousands were converted. Thank God for those who have a heart for charity.

Acts 5:1-6: VALUE THE RELATIONSHIP

Were there hypocrites growing among the wheat? All societies this side of heaven have a mixture of the good and the misled, and sin abounds.

Possibly Ananias and Sapphira pledged the full amount to the church of proceeds from the sale of their property and then failed to follow through. There

now exists a possibility of embezzlement. You can't embezzle that which you own, but if it rightfully belonged

to the Church, then you can be guilty. (Read the story of Achan in the OT who took some booty for his own enhancement that had been set aside for sacred use. He was stoned and then had stones heaped upon him.)

Ananias and Sapphira devalued their relationship with the church by holding back part of the proceeds from the sale. Ananias misrepresented the Holy Spirit and seemed to forget there is always divine judgment waiting on us when we mock God and deceive others. Pride and/or covetousness belie total reliance on the power of the Holy Ghost. When

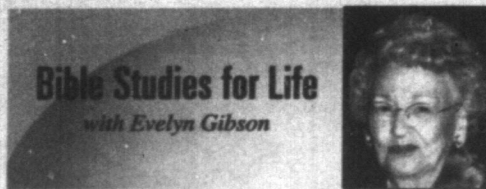
we boast of good works or even promise good works without consummation, then we have lied to God. Before the property was sold, it belonged to him, but his vow had changed the equation. Better not to vow than to vow and not pay. What a dangerous thing it is to resist the Spirit. Sometimes in church membership subtraction is better than addition.

ACTS 6:1-7: RAISE UP SERVANTHOOD IN THE CHURCH

For there to be church growth, there must be members willing to fill leadership positions. One element of leadership is to discern and then meet the needs of others in the Christian community. Church growth also brings about discontent on distributing public charity.

These scripture selections are all about the need for servant help and leadership from members in general, NOT deacons, elders, etc. The apostles were responsible here for the ministry, care of the needy, widows, etc. Don't wait for a formal invitation from a "church dignitary", jump in with obedience. Faith itself is obedience and faith also produces obedience. We get an encouraging progress report in V. 7 "So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith." (NIV Study Bible).

Gibson is a member of Monticello Church, Monticello.



Bible Studies for Life

with Evelyn Gibson

Youth propelling 'new Christian conservatism'

WASHINGTON (BP) — Young people are propelling a "new Christian conservatism," Owen Strachan asserted in an Oct. 24 lecture at the Family Research Council in Washington.

Strachan, of Boyce College, the undergraduate school of Southern Seminary on Louisville, Ky., lectured on The Sacrificial Witness of the Christian Moral Tradition in the most recent Family Policy Lecture.

"The spirit of Wilberforce is on the move," said Strachan, assistant professor of theology and church history. "This movement sees that love in its essence is not shorn of conviction, love is instead a summons to a joyful transformation. Now is the moment for a new Christian conservatism, or what we could call a new social witness."

The new Christian conservatism "grounds its identity in the preaching of the Gospel," Strachan said, "yet it cannot help but act on behalf of others."

Strachan pointed to the life and witness of German pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was martyred in 1945 for his stand against the Nazi regime. Prior to his death, Bonhoeffer mourned the "moral equivocation" of his time and the silence of many Christians in the face of evil acts committed against helpless people.

In present-day America, the situation is comparable, Strachan said, noting, "Our conflict is not militaristic — we are a nation divided by ideas, driven by beliefs."

America has shifted from Protestant ideals, with many Christians choosing to balk when handed hard issues, Strachan said. Instead, they bemoan how they are "tired of culture wars, for being known what we are against, not what we are for."

In response to the trend of Christians reshaping their beliefs toward cultural demands, Strachan asked, "How should we frame our public testimony?"

Citing examples throughout church history, Strachan noted the examples of the apostolic fathers and martyrs in the first few centuries of the Christian church.

"In the midst of this world of opposition, Christians testified to the ethics created by the Gospel in the public square," Strachan said as he shared the stories of Blandina, a female slave tortured to death in the second century, and Justin Martyr, who sought the transformation of lives and culture.

The early Christian writing known as the Didache also condemns the culture's approval of abortion and pedophilia, Strachan said.

"The vital morality of the Christians stood out for what it represented: a call to salvation, a summons to a better world," he said of the Christian witness in the early church.

Compelled by the example of the early church martyrs, Augustine developed the theory of the wise judge in his City of God who brings "the ethics of the city of God into the city of man."

Strachan also observed the commitment of Puritan pastor Samuel Sewall and British abolitionist William Wilberforce, who fought against slavery to "help the marginalized, the voiceless."

"The Christian moral framework has changed the world over and over again," Strachan said.

Puritans like Jonathan Edwards and Samuel Hopkins also helped build the "benevolent empire," which provided hospitals, opened orphanages and funded missions programs through its theological convictions.

In the 20th century, Strachan said men like Bonhoeffer and Martin Luther King Jr. "electrified the conscience through their distinctive calls to an ethical way of life" and "paid the ultimate price for their Protestant convictions."

"We are the true culture. We are those who must speak up and create this culture in the fallen world," Strachan said. Describing what he called the "new Christian conservatism," he asserted that the movement, contrary to popular belief, is vibrant and youthful.

"It is a movement born not of cynicism but of hope," Strachan said, noting the reaction against the softer Christianity which decries any conviction that leads to cultural opposition.

This movement is "built upon the framework of the Moral Majority," Strachan said, but claimed in contrast that the new way offers "a gracious voice" and a "focus on human flourishing."

Strachan acknowledged "that ultimate victory may only come when the curse is overturned," but urged Christians to pursue this better way of "sacrificial witness."

"Our call is not to capitulate; our call is to witness and, indeed, to sacrifice," Strachan said.

Strachan's full lecture is available online in both video and audio formats at the Family Research Council's website, <http://www.frc.org/eventregistration/the-sacrificial-witness-of-the-christian-moral-tradition>.



FOCUSED ON CHRIST — Louisiana State University's Painted Posse had their hand-painted crosses on their chests airbrushed from an LSU Sports Department photo. "Despite what happened, our main focus is to represent Christ," the Painted Posse's Oct. 24 media statement noted. (BP photo)

'Painted Posse' wants to put incident behind; reflect Christ

BATON ROUGE, La. (BP) — When someone in the Louisiana State University (LSU) Sports Department airbrushed hand-painted crosses off the bare chests of the Painted Posse in a widely distributed photo following the LSU-South Carolina game, it sparked a controversy over political correctness and censorship of university students' religious views.

The Posse, a group of Christian students who proclaim their faith by wearing the crosses, had a meeting and asked themselves, "What would Jesus do?" They publicly forgave the university for the incident and are urging everyone to put the incident behind them.

When news first got out about the altered photo and LSU was contacted by national and local media, LSU spokesman Herb Vincent claimed they altered the photo from the Oct. 20 game because they didn't want to offend anyone.

"We don't want to imply we are making any religious or political statements, so we airbrushed it out," Vincent said. "It was just a straight sports communications message, no politics involved, no religion."

From now on, Vincent said, they'll just not use photos that could be construed to have religious overtones.

The Posse, formed in 2003 and featured in hundreds of photographs from ESPN to local newspapers, said they don't want to further the controversy. Posse member and LSU senior Sloan Bishop, a member of the Baptist Collegiate Ministry there, helped craft a statement released to local media and posted on the Posse's Facebook page.

"We talked about how we wanted to respond and end it in the most Christ-like way possible," Bishop, who attends The Ring church held at Grace Baptist Church in Baton Rouge, said in a phone interview. "None of us feel attacked in any way. We bear no ill will toward LSU or staff members."

The press release reads, in part: "In light of the recent airbrushing of our crosses by LSU staff members and the discussion that has followed, the Painted Posse — a group of Christian LSU students

— would like to thank the public for the outpouring of support both for the group and for Christ... The University has reached out to our group and apologized for this incident."

"We... do not agree with the University's recent decision to airbrush crosses out of the photo of some of our members. We also respect the opinions of those who do not agree with us. Despite what happened, our main focus is to represent Christ. This Christ is our Savior who died on a cross to save us from sin, was raised again, and now lives in our lives."

"Our goal as the Painted Posse is to portray Christ through our actions while cheering on our Tigers! ... We are humbled by the many who have shown support for our beliefs, but we would encourage all fellow members of the LSU family to please switch the focus from this story and the Posse to supporting our beloved university."

"... We strongly discourage the wearing of a cross as a way to protest the university or its recent decision. We desire that no further negative light would be shone upon the university that we love. We acknowledge the

efforts of the LSU administration and look forward to serving the university as both fans and students."

Bishop's father, a deacon at First Church in Covington, La., when asked about the issue, said, "I'm so proud of each one of these young men that they are taking a stand. It really surprised me that LSU airbrushed that out. When Sports Illustrated and ESPN have run their pictures it wasn't airbrushed out. They're not trying to cause a controversy. I think it's awesome what they're doing."

Posse member Cameron Cooke told CampusReform.org, "The cross painting is important to me because it represents who I am as a Christ follower, and it reminds me who I need to act like in Death Valley."

Posse member Joel D'Aubin told the NBC affiliate in Baton Rouge, "We all have a passion for LSU football and for Christ. Just being able to be that example every single Saturday is an awesome experience."

Painted Posse press release